

# AS ARTISTS

BY PAT KETCHUM

CAN SHADOW PUPPETS AND FOLKLORE actually improve a third-grader's grasp of math and science?

Absolutely, according to Professor Susan Duffy, chair of the Cal Poly Liberal Studies Department. "And we're not talking 'turkey hands' here, either," she insists.

Duffy, who also directs the Central Coast Center for Arts Education (CCCAE), a program that promotes dance, theater, music and the visual arts as children's learning tools, believes passionately in the power of art to transform classroom instruction at the elementary level.

Hoping to stem the tide of arts education cutbacks at many public schools, the Liberal Studies Department and the CCCAE are arranging funding in the form of grants and endowments for innovative teaching programs that use artistic expression.

Created at Cal Poly in 2004, the center has since raised nearly \$90,000 to bring art into the lives of California children.

Thanks to a \$25,000 grant from The Dana Foundation, a private philanthropic organization, the center's latest undertaking is a program called "Illuminating Shadows: Introducing Storytelling and Shadow Puppetry to a New Generation." The pioneering project teams teachers with theatrical artists in workshops, where they learn to incorporate ancient narrative forms into their lesson plans. The program focuses on teachers whose schools are located in the rural areas of San Luis Obispo and northern Santa Barbara counties.

Lori Mitchell, a teacher at Shandon Elementary School, is already applying what she learned in the Cal Poly workshops. Her students make their own puppets using black paper and bamboo skewers.

The giggling first-graders then retell "The Billy Goats Gruff" and other old favorites while standing behind a fabric screen with light cast from an overhead projector. "It's a creative outlet that excites my students while I'm sticking to the curriculum mandated by the state."

Using shadow puppetry as a teaching aid, Mitchell is able to satisfy most of the first-grade geometry standards by using





assorted shapes and letting her students describe their position in relation to the screen. She even uses plant and animal stories to accomplish state requirements in the life sciences category.

Teachers in grades three through six aren't finding as many opportunities to use art to engage and motivate their students, but not because they don't want to. "There's so much pressure on teachers for students to do well on state tests, art is the first thing to go," Mitchell points out. "There's hardly enough time to coach the students on what will be on the tests."

The Arts Education Partnership, a national coalition of arts, education, business, philanthropic and government organizations, has reams of data supporting the claim that children who participate in art activities perform at a higher academic level than those who do not, especially in rural areas.

Nonetheless, art specialists are a dying breed at many Central Coast schools. Through the CCCAE program, however, project artists not only teach area educators, they also undergo training themselves to become arts education consultants.

"They were wide-eyed and in awe," says artist Tommy Hacker, who took his goat show on the road this summer to Mary Buren Elementary School in Guadalupe. Initially nervous "because today's kids are so focused on technology," he was surprised how well they related to the old tales and the shadow puppetry.

"It's the most magic for your buck," brags lifelong artist and puppeteer Judy Roberto, who calls shadow puppetry a form of art therapy. "The kids quickly minimize their problems and

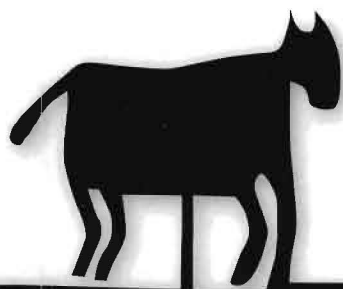
overcome their shyness through the creation and projection of their stories and images."

So the legend of the goats that tripped and trapped over the troll's bridge may be old, but it's part of a contemporary plan to reintroduce arts education in public elementary school classrooms.

"Snip, Snap, Snout. This tale's told out."

For more information on the Central Coast Center for Art Education, visit [www.cla.calpoly.edu/ls/cccae](http://www.cla.calpoly.edu/ls/cccae).

The Arts Education Partnership (AEP) is a national coalition of arts, education, business, philanthropic and government organizations that demonstrate and promote the essential role of the arts in the learning and development of every child and in the improvement of America's schools. □







# THE PAPER CHASE NO MORE

BY STACIA MOMBURG

PAPER IS SO SIX YEARS AGO. Just ask any student who's been recruited and enrolled at Cal Poly since 2000.

According to Wikipedia.com, the notion of a "paperless" office dates to a 1975 article in *Business Week* magazine, in which a publicist predicted that paper would become an obsolete encumbrance in the office of the future.

Having received its first electronic application in 1992, Cal Poly's Admissions and Recruitment office literally made the shift to a paperless office in 2000, when James Maraviglia, assistant vice president for admissions, recruitment and financial aid, joined forces with Hobson's Management Technology, an international provider of education and recruitment information, to develop state-of-the-art recruiting software.

Using "Flash" Web video messages to capture the attention of recruits, Maraviglia and his team make initial e-mail contact with high school sophomores, and continue sending updates, messages and deadline information throughout the enrollment process. On average, a prospective Cal Poly student will receive 54 e-mail messages throughout any recruitment cycle. They are also invited to participate in chat rooms and targeted pod casts.

Each newly admitted student receives personalized e-messages from the Cal Poly president, provost, and their department chair, explains Maraviglia.

He says prospective students also can easily create their own Cal Poly "portal" to receive targeted, updated information about the colleges and campus activities that interest them, as well as messages about services such as housing, financial aid and summer advising.

In February, Maraviglia and his staff again teamed up with Hobson's to launch "Respuestas EMT," an online tool that enables prospective students to ask questions and receive answers in Spanish directly from the Web. The new program is endorsed by the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities.

"Not only are we able to provide 24/7 access to information about the admissions and enrollment process that is specific to Hispanic prospective students, we also show our dedication to furthering the educational progress of the fast-growing Hispanic population as a whole," Maraviglia says.

How effective is this high-tech recruiting effort? Cal Poly just documented its 12th consecutive record applicant pool – more than 35,000 candidates applied for roughly 4,500 undergraduate openings. And numbering 3,800, this year's freshman class is the university's largest ever.

There is quality to complement the quantity, too. Incoming freshmen had an aggregate grade-point average of 3.83. □

